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Vail, Theodore Newton

Address by Theo. N. Vail

[Lyndonville, Vt.]

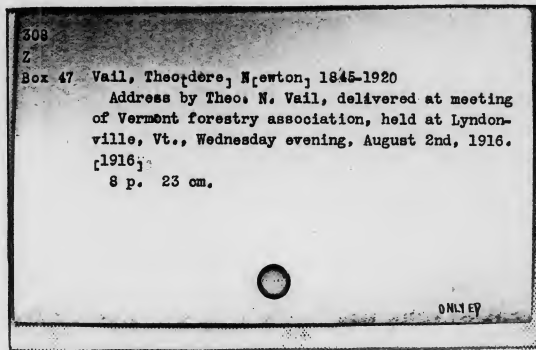
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ADDRESS BY THEO. N. VAIL

**Delivered at Meeting of Vermont For-
estry Association**

**Held at Lyndonville, Vt.,
Wednesday Evening, August 2nd
1916**

Mr B. N. July 3.17

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen :

When I was asked to speak the natural question was, "What about?" The logical answer, at a Forestry meeting, was Forestry, and incidental to forestry State Reservations suggested.

Considering these topics there seemed to be many things collateral and necessary to the success of the enterprises, many things necessary to be done before entering upon, or in connection with these undertakings to insure their success.

My paper tonight which will embrace some of these collateral questions, may at first appear to be wide of the subject but you must remember that there are many elements which are common to all successful undertakings

Preparedness, conservation and conservatism are three great words of our language and three great factors in our civilization. They are the necessary aids to success and prosperity. Extremists on both sides have abused them and faddists have used them to sugar coat their harmful "cure all" but fallacious theories.

When they are exercised with intelligence, common sense and due respect to existing and probable conditions, nothing but good can follow. The extent of that good, will be in exact ratio to the intelligence and judgment used in the exercise of them. Neglect or wrongfully exercised or carried to unreasonable extremes, confusion, disturbance, uncertainty must follow.

PREPAREDNESS

Preparedness is the getting ready for action before the time for action comes; that is, being ready to meet that which we know or have reason to believe will come. It is getting ready to do what we must do before we commence doing. It applies as well to the battles and struggles of life as to the battles and struggles of nations. It applies to every action or movement in life.

CONSERVATION

Conservation is a word at which many balk. It is a simple word. It is only caring for or saving that which exists and preserving it for future use. It is thrift. Conservation which saves for future use, that which we need for present use, or conserves at an unreasonable cost in time or money that which cannot be used or disposed of to advantage, is overdoing conservation; it is miserly; it is economically bad. Overdoing conservation is as bad as underdoing.

CONSERVATISM

Conservatism is another word that is used as a term of reproach. It should not be, it should be sticking to what you know is good and

satisfactory until it is demonstrated that something better has come to take its place. Conservatism, which will not be convinced, or clings to the old simply because it is old, is old foggyism and is as bad as that kind of radicalism or progressiveness which would destroy all that exists without first providing something as dependable to take its place. Rational progressiveness makes for better things. Conservatism preserves what is good.

Preparedness, we are hearing much of, but it is not the preparedness for the work of life, it is National military preparedness against outside aggression. As that is a popular subject and one much in evidence, a little consideration of it is not out of place, particularly as some of the preparedness for military life will be equally effective in our ordinary life. It is right that we should be prepared against outside aggression as far as possible. Our boundaries, coastline and ports should be sufficiently protected to hold off any probable attack. It takes a long time to make ships, armament, coast or border defence and soldiers. Ships, armament, coast and border defence we should be amply prepared with, and as far as possible they should be kept up to current modern standards.

To maintain a standing army sufficient for all emergencies would be a serious economic handicap. It would take young men out of their work of life just at the most important period to them. It would take them out of the economic pursuits of life to the serious detriment of their own future and that of the country as a whole. It would entail a vast burden upon the revenue of the country. We should maintain a reasonably large and thoroughly organized and educated skeleton army; an army that would be sufficient to hold any attack at bay until further preparation could be made.

The time necessary to create an army is the time necessary to drill and train men to act together as a unit under direction, to obey orders without question or hesitation, to be ready as a body for quick, certain movement and to know how to care for themselves when on a campaign. Much of this preparation, of this drilling and training should be part of the education of youth. Physical training, the training in drilling and walking, standing, exercise and proper care of body, develops grace of movement, alertness and nimbleness and is necessary to the proper development of the body, to the full enjoyment of health and to the betterment of mankind.

Team work, obedience and discipline, as developed by physical training, are necessary in civic life, and to economic success.

Team work is all working together as one to accomplish a purpose.

Obedience is prompt response to obligation, to duty whether to self, family, nation or superior.

Discipline is subordinating the individual's will to the will of others, to obedience.

In military life all these qualities are absolute necessities and the lack of them invites defeat. In real life the lack of them also invites defeat in attaining the larger purpose of life, but without them life can be lived in a shiftless careless way which is neither to the advantage of the individual or the community.

Whether it is possible or even probable that we shall ever be forced again into an extensive conflict to preserve our country is an open question. One man's guess or prophecy is as good as another's. Experience of the recent past has shown that human nature has not changed since prehistoric man had to hunt for his food and fight to prevent its being taken away from him. It might be, because we are so big and so far away from everything, that we shall be let alone. But if we are to stand nominal guardian, or national protector of this hemisphere, as we assert or claim to be, we may be called upon at any time to enforce our mandates or meet our ultimatum. Be that as it may, we hope we may never need the trained boys for actual military conflict, but we do want our boys and our girls to learn all that physical and military training and drilling teaches them: to be alert, active, nimble, to have good digestion and circulation; to be full fleshed, ruddy skinned with fresh bright clear complexions and expressions. We want them to have that discipline which brings obedience to family, social and civic duty, to the command of those in authority. We want from them unquestioned recognition of the superiority of law and order, and the absolute subordination of the individual to it.

By drilling and training a few moments every day at school, by giving a few weeks each year for a few years to mobilization and mobilized training and maneuvers, there could always be a trained force from which the skeleton regular organization could be voluntarily filled and we would be prepared for any national crisis, or for any participation in the battles of nations, and, much greater than this, we would be preparing and conserving our youth for the battles of life, for a better home life, for a larger enjoyment and broader mentality, and for a vista of better things.

Let us have preparedness which will do this for our civilization while at the same time meeting all the requirements in case our civilization should, through our own foolishness or the aggressiveness of others, lapse momentarily into barbarism.

Conservation has been used much and abused much in connection with our national resources. It is a big open question; how best to serve the present necessities of man and yet have proper consideration for future necessities? If you are thrifty you conserve fruits and vegetables and other products for your future use, but you only conserve articles particularly intended for that purpose, or the surplus above your present needs. That is what should be the teaching of conservation—how to use without waste our natural resources for our present needs, and protect, and conserve the rest for future use. When the present needs are in conflict with our real or conjectural future needs, we must decide in favor of the present demands, or those of the near future.

Conservation as applied to forestry is a question of location or environment and local conditions. In Vermont it is not waste to burn up the small branches of the fallen trees; fuel is too plenty and too cheap and labor too expensive to prepare them for use; yet in some parts of the world it would be wanton waste not to save for use for domestic purposes every last stick and twig. It was not waste for our pioneer fathers to make a slash of the timbered sides of these Vermont hills and burn it to clear the land for agricultural purposes, because the wood encumbered the ground and was an obstruction to settlement, but now if you wanted to clear a piece of timber for cultivation or pasture you would not do it that way. It is not waste or wanton destruction to clear woodland to the last stick, if you protect the new growth for future use. Our timber land must now be treated the same as any growing crop—planted or be allowed to plant itself, protected and harvested at maturity, and our shade trees must not be held too sacred to remove if they become a nuisance instead of a pleasure or a benefit.

Much is talked about conservation in connection with the freshets of spring and dwindling of our streams in summer. Many of the things which some think due to lack of conservation are the inevitable sequence of cultivation and settlement. Timber land cut over but not burned over, if the new growth is protected, or timber land of growing trees, will practically protect the streams as well as if the old timber was left standing. Uniform streams throughout the year have never existed, and to make them would require reservoirs to catch all above the average flow and to hold it to use as needed. The tangled, mossy, fibrous ground of the primeval wilderness and the valley swamps caused by fallen timber and luxuriant weed growth acted as reservoirs and did maintain a more uniform flow than we now have, but they did not prevent freshets when the warm spring rains came on a great depth of snow laying on frozen ground, or when a big downpour fell on fully saturated ground and swamps full of water—but who wants to restore that condition? Cultivated fields will not absorb as much

water as forest bramble. There will be more soil washed away from a plowed field than a meadow or forest, but of what value would the forests be if there were no cultivated fields to support the people who create commerce, build cities, and of what use or value would there be for forest products? Of what advantage is it to let timber that is valuable stand and deteriorate?

Much has been said about the wanton destruction of the forests in the west on lands which were not at the time necessary for settlement. If it had not been for cheap lumber in the west during the last half of the last century, there would have been more hardships, more difficulties in the settlement and subjugation of that vast country. The plains were timberless except the few trees worthless for timber on some oasis, or fringing the larger creeks or rivers. Cheap lumber brought from other points was a necessity to build the shack or shanty shelter of the pioneer in a stoneless country and to fence the fields before the day of barbed wire.

Cheap lumber has been a great factor in the upbuilding of our country, and cheap lumber must mean careless and wasteful methods of lumbering because you must take only the best and easiest to get.

While past methods here and present methods in some environments and under some conditions have been and are justifiable, there is no justification or excuse for the continuance of some of those methods. So long as the bad effect of any method is over balanced by the benefit to the community, then that method is justifiable. When it ceases to be more beneficial than harmful it should change. That time has come when many improved methods can be adopted to the advantage of all and whatever you expect to be adopted must be of some advantage to the state and to the community, and it would be a good business proposition, to reforest and protect all the hills not utilizable for other purposes.

It is useless to advocate the general reforestation of our hills as a work of the small individual owner or farmer in any large way for many reasons. Wherever land is more valuable for any other purpose it would not be reasonable to expect it. Where it would be profitable few of the dwellers on the hills have the capital to invest in the planting or are able to carry the plantation for a prospective profit fifty or sixty years ahead, and even if they had the capital it could, as a rule, be used to greater immediate advantage.

Reforesting and conservation on a large scale is a State proposition, or a proposition for large timber using corporations. A corporation which is a perpetual individual could well afford to replant where necessary or allow it to reforest itself to such an extent as would cover depreciation, or restore current exhaustion and in this way pro-

vide for future needs. This is now being done by many pulp and other like companies for the annual supply of ties.

The farmer, the individual, can conserve in a small way on his wood lot or sugar orchard, or can even reforest by using his otherwise idle moments and in this way capitalize them. In a small way each can conserve and protect, beautify and improve his surroundings while at the same time supplying his present needs and providing for the future. Such a policy, consistently followed, in a few years will surprise you by its extent and magnitude. Clear up the brush wood to give the new growth a chance to grow, cut and trim out the matured and surplus growth so that it will not be using the soil food that should go to the other trees; protect your own lots and help protect your neighbor's from fire.

Cultivated fields and light soiled pastures should be protected from unnecessary washing or gullyng so that as little soil as possible is carried off to fill brooks or make some delta thousands of miles away. All that is needed is a little common sense, thinking and observing and doing what is necessary to be done when the need is first noticed. Every one of these sand wastes we have around here started first from a break in the soil and could have been stopped before any considerable damage was done.

Each farm has its peculiarities. A little thought and study will determine how any of these new notions or how much advice coming from all sides is of benefit or can be made use of, but one must first have full information of what has been done and what is being done. It is just as foolish to consider any proposition without knowing what is going on as it is not to consider it at all, or to blindly follow every latest fad, or to stick sullenly and blindly to old fashioned ideas.

Anything will come out all right if it is approached from a practical standpoint and brains and experience and above all observation are used. Know what is going on; follow the good and discard the bad.

If reforestation and conservation on a large scale is the work of the State—how is it best to go about it?

Vermont with its beautiful vistas of hills, valleys, lakes and streams or its broad panoramas with distant background of superlative landscape will always be sought by those in search of vacation and recreation.

There are wilder, more majestic and sublime or awe inspiring sections of the country but none more beautiful in its combination of cultivated and rugged variety. The greater the development the greater will be the beauty and the possibility of that reposeful enjoyment which so many prefer to imposing grandeur.

Certain states as well as the United States have established reservations for conservation and preservation purposes.

The hills and mountain valley streams of Vermont were once and should be the home abiding place of all kinds of useful wild life.

Burned over mountain sides and sawdust have dried and filled up many of our streams. Illegal hunting and fishing have done the rest and have virtually destroyed the fishing and shooting and is retarding all attempts at restoration. From both the aesthetic and practical standpoint all this should be remedied. It can be done to a certain extent, by rigid enforcement of proper laws and the repeal of laws made for effect only, not to be enforced.

If the State should establish several reservations which should include the head waters of our rivers, and reestablish and protect upon the hills the natural timber growth, make some improvement in the course of these streams, and protect these reservations absolutely from all kinds of depredation and destruction, it would in time restore all that Vermont once had, with all the additions which time and experience have proven to be useful. These reservations would be the nurseries of game and fish for the lower streams and valleys.

It would benefit the state both as a place for habitation and resort. It would be a source of large profit to the state from an actual return in money derived from licenses for fishing, hunting and from the sale of lumber, while the indirect return will be almost beyond estimate. Vermont is well able to make the original investment of capital which would bring ample returns in enjoyment and pleasure and add so greatly to the prosperity of the state. All men filling the high public offices like some great reform or beneficial movement to mark their term. Here is an opportunity for our next governor to hand his name down to future generations.

To aid our industrial development reservoirs could be established at natural points, and in this way preserve the lower river reaches from excessive floods and establish that equable flow of water into the streams which is so necessary to industrial development.

There are many details to be worked out by actual experience. Only a general idea can be presented. There are no impossibilities, while the probabilities, aesthetic, industrial and financial are great.

To make any such movement a success, no one individual, either by careless or intentional disregard of the rights of others or of law, should be allowed to destroy, by disregarding regulations and laws, that which was being done for the benefit of all. There is too much indifference to, and toleration of the selfishness of individuals which allows them by encroachments small and large upon common rights, or by the making impossible the full enjoyment by other individuals or by the pub-

lie as a whole, of their rights. It is time we stopped talking about that independence of the individual, which is in effect only surly self-indulgence and egotistical self-assertion and a bad excuse for bad education and bad breeding.

Accessibility and easy access and intercommunication are important factors in the development of the country for any purpose.

We should so foster our ways of communication leading in and out of our state that the coming and going can be made pleasant, comfortable and available.

We should see to it that our inter state ways of intercommunication are the best possible, and to show the best in our state some should be purely scenic roads, coursing the ridge poles of our beautiful country. We are beginning to have a very perfect road system but we must remember that we not only need to build roads but to care for them. The best made road begins to deteriorate the moment it is finished and the motor pushing itself along by its wheels finds the weak spots and unless attended there is trouble for the road and discomfort, if not danger, for the user.

Eternal vigilance is the price of good roads.

If in our striving for what is best for our state, we give first thought to its desirability as a place to live and get a living with favorable and desirable environments and conditions, we have gone a long way towards making it even more desirable for the outsider, for the visitor.

It can be done without disturbing our comfort or our ease, it can be done with profit to ourselves and with little or no additional labor, if we only make effective every bit of labor we do.

We don't want to make Vermont the Switzerland of America but we want to make it the Green Mountain State of America, unique and of its kind incomparable. We want to develop its natural charms and resources. We want to make it so attractive that it will hold its young people here and bring the absent ones back. We want all the world to come here and play with us, and all that can to come and live with us.

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